1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

Foreword

In his informative and stimulating introduction to the present volume, Dr. Dube has said, '. . . . what we need to-day is a series of studies of village communities from different parts of the country covering the many divergent patterns of organization and ethos.' Dr. Dube has not only stated the need; he has shown us what can be achieved in striving to meet it. His volume is a solid study and one which will doubtless take its place among the standard community studies made in various parts of the world which he cites in his bibliography.

In a number of ways this volume is especially valuable and challenging and is a tonic to present-day research into Indian village life. In the first place, it is a total study, not in the sense that it gives us all possible details concerning the village Shamirpet, but in the sense that it presents between two covers all important aspects of the culture of this community. Though the author has been at pains to keep the account fairly general and uncluttered, the reader receives a convincing and reasonably adequate introduction to the historical, geographical, and political setting and the social, economic, and ritual structure of the village described. One puts the book down with a feeling that one has really come to know Shamirpet, its background, people, and problems quite well; even if everything about something is not there, something about almost everything is given. This is almost a departure in social science writing about Indian village life. Such studies have tended to be topical, specialized, and often too brief. Of attempts to give a sustained, many-sided picture of an Indian community we have very few; there are Gertrude

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

FOREWORD

114 121 Emerson's *Voiceless India* and William Wiser's *Behind Mud Walls*, both pioneer efforts, and a few others.

There are a good many reasons why more total studies of Indian villages have not been written to date, but one obvious reason should not be overlooked—the study of Indian village life yields material extremely complex and difficult to deal with in this manner. The village is a unity, yet half of its adult population, the women, come from outside communities with which the village is linked by complicated marriage relations. Each individual belongs to a caste which exercises a great deal of control over him, yet whose ruling group has jurisdiction far beyond the village confines. Each one of the many castes is a veritable subculture, with special traditions, prerogatives, rituals, food habits, and status, and this caste and its attributes is ordinarily a regional or national rather than a village phenomenon. Moreover, Indian culture and philosophy are old and rich. It is not easy to do justice to these background traditions which are the ultimate basis of much that goes on in present-day Indian village life and yet convey freshly and convincingly the localized, modern derivative of these historic impulses. And in this instance Dr. Dube's task was not made easier by the presence, in this village, of a sizeable group of Muslims. Consequently, at least on the religious side, he had two great traditions with which village activities had to be linked, and in terms of which they had to be interpreted. It was necessary to take into consideration all these outside influences and links, and still retain a focus on the village. Only those who have struggled with the intricacies of Indian village material and have before them the task of ordering it can fully appreciate Dr. Dube's accomplishment.

But this study has more to recommend it than that the author has given us ample coverage and has not been distracted from his central object. One of its attractions is that it rises above mere description; it provides analytical insights and provocative concepts. Students of Indian village culture and of folk culture in general will do well to examine Dr. Dube's definition and treatment of 'allied families' (as distinct from the lineage or general body of close relatives). Again, by analysing out six major factors which contribute toward status differentiation in Shamirpet, the author cuts through a bewildering maze of data and provides a key to the understanding of the relative status positions of the sub-

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

groups of the village and of individuals within these sub-groups. There is nothing remarkable or even particularly original in the factors he recognizes, but their application to the data in context is illuminating. It is the same with the identification of the new set of influences which, according to the author, are to-day playing upon the community. Whether the list is complete or not, it serves to explain much that has happened in the recent past and acts as a guide, or at least a hypothesis, to predict some future developments.

Dr. Dube's book has still another attribute which will intrigue many readers. He is not only interested in principles or factors which will illuminate specific aspects of the culture, but he is searching for abstractions of a higher level, integrating ideas which characterize and colour the entire culture. This quest is particularly marked in the concluding pages where 'the adjustment of the individual to the universe . . . peaceful adjustment and adaptation to the laws that control the universe,' and the tendency 'to view everything as hierarchically structured' are singled out as fundamental drives in the thought and activities of the group. The interest in discovering the kind and number of unifying and harmonizing principles which can be identified for any culture is strong to-day, and Dr. Dube's views of the binding forces in Indian culture and the effect of contemporary events upon them should receive close attention.

In the 'boiling down' of a large body of data to book size, it is often the sad fact that the vital essence is boiled off and a flavourless brew is left. Dr. Dube has off-set this necessity for general statement and summary by introducing source material and case material at strategic intervals. In this way, we are constantly reminded that even the statistics point to the joys and sorrows, triumphs and defeats of very real people and very vivid personalities.

The volume has one other characteristic which deserves attention. The data which have gone into it are the product of group research. It is, in fact, one of the first examples of what can be accomplished through a group, inter-disciplinary approach. More than eighteen staff members and students of Osmania University gathered the material under Dr. Dube's direction. Six faculties of the university were represented in the effort. Much of the material which the natural scientists collected is technical

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

who were born and brought up more or less in the very social setting that they were describing. Of course, the level of analysis in these works differs considerably, ranging from somewhat impressionistic accounts to fairly deep sociological and economic analyses, but they constitute a departure of no mean significance in anthropology as being symbols of an awakening of interest in people for the anthropological and sociological study of their own society. The range of such studies has indeed been wide enough and has included several Western societies as well. Contributions such as *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Irish Countryman* by Conrad Arensberg, *Life in a Welsh Countryside* by Alwyn D. Rees, although they are the outcome of different research techniques and present different levels of analyses, provide much useful material for comparative studies. Mention must be made, in this connection, of the important and stimulating work of the Lynds and of the Warner school in the analysis of more complex communities. *Middletown* and its successor *Middletown in Transition* by R. S. and H. M. Lynd have justly come to be regarded as classics in this field. *The Social Life of a Modern Community* and *The Status System of a Modern Community* by W. L. Warner and Paul S. Lunt, and *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* by W. L. Warner and Leo Srole, too, are equally outstanding works in this class. Some of the works listed above have provided the impetus for more community studies in different parts of the world—in the so-called under-developed areas as well as in technologically advanced, industrialized countries. At the present time very considerable field research either has been done or is being done in many parts of the world—in Middle America, in Puerto Rico (under the direction of Julian Steward), in Great Britain (by the Edinburgh University, under the direction of Kenneth L. Little) and in India (by the Cornell group under the direction of Morris E. Opler, and by some Indian universities).

Studies of modern communities as well as of non-literate or technologically 'under-developed' societies whose traditions are rooted in great civilizations of antiquity present a series of practical and methodological problems. Modern communities are larger—both in population and spatial distribution—compared with the primitive societies hitherto studied by anthropologists. This makes it difficult for the anthropologist and his associates to

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

121 have first-hand contact with more or less the entire community; and even at his best the scientist can have effective acquaintance with only a small area of the territory. Necessarily, therefore, he must work only in a few segments of the community, whose selection, if it is to be sufficiently representative, raises important methodological questions. Here we must have an adequate and effective sampling technique. The situation is further complicated by the fact that within the general framework of a modern community we have several subcultures. Besides certain dominant values, there are divergent subsidiary values. The community has its established norms, but the range of variation in behaviour patterns is also very considerable. The sample to be studied must take into account all these factors. Finally, the community must be studied in both its rural and urban settings, and in this context due attention should be given to the vital interaction and inter-relations between its different components. The actual research and the presentation of its results also raise a number of complicated issues. Literary and historical evidence may have developed some stereotypes about the community which may be taken for granted by the research workers and may ultimately colour the results of the whole research. It is easier to start with a totally unbiased mind in a society about which nothing, or at any rate very little, is known. In the case of historically well-known societies, however, it is not easy to overcome an unconscious bias—either for or against that society—for it may well have become a habit of mind. Because of active political and economic interaction between their communities, the prevailing complex of sentiments and attitudes may determine the relations between those who are studying and those who are being studied. These relations have to be taken into account. Even in generally non-literate and underdeveloped areas the people who are being studied are not totally unaware of some of the wider implications of these studies. Sentiments of nationalism, caste or class-consciousness, local patriotism and thoughts of the possible reactions and attitudes of the outside world may govern their response to the enquiries being made by the investigators. With regard to some phases of their life the people may resist any investigation by 'outsiders' and may look upon it as a most unwelcome intrusion. A field-worker born and brought up within that very culture may, on the other hand, overlook certain trends and facts, and may even unconsciously seek to

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

rationalize and justify some elements in the life of his community. A proper scientific training can eliminate these dangers very considerably, but ideally the association of someone with a different cultural background with such a community research would perhaps provide the most satisfactory corrective. This would apply equally, but in the reverse, to the work being done in a community by 'outsiders' whose participation in the life and culture of this society may be so limited as to preclude the possibility of their having a firm grasp on the inner thought processes and subtle attitude patterns and value judgements of the members of the community. In this case utilization of properly trained collaborators from that very culture would be invaluable for the projected research. These points are quite important and cannot be dismissed lightly in planning serious community studies.

On the credit side, these community studies have several obvious advantages. They do not entail work in strange and difficult lands. They may be less romantic and not so very picturesque, but they certainly permit greater freedom of movement and also the use of practically all the amenities of modern civilization. The arduous conditions of research take only the more adventurous among the social scientists to remote islands and isolated tribal communities, but in the average community studies participation of a large number of investigators is possible because of the less difficult conditions of work. This permits team-work and also an inter-disciplinary approach. The investigator can gainfully use historical documents, literary evidence and government and administrative records. The language barrier in this case is not insurmountable, for even if the investigators are unacquainted with the language of the people they are studying, they can easily find bi-lingual people in the community itself who may have a working knowledge of the investigator's language. Finally, if the aims of research are properly explained to the people, and their confidence is gained by sympathy, tact and perseverance, the people themselves may come forward to offer intelligent co-operation.

Notwithstanding these advantages, there will still remain some of the problems and difficulties sketched above. But in the words of Gillin, from the methodological point of view 'there is nothing insuperably difficult about the solution of these problems'. He lists three requirements: '(1) Money in fair and substantial amounts; (2) large numbers of well-trained anthropologists; (3) the

l: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW 17 Telugu AW 17

121 co-operation of specialists in other social and psychological sciences under an overall and integrated plan of investigation.'[1] If, however, it is intended to study only the social structure and organization, the specialists from other cognate sciences could be omitted; although their association would doubtless be of great value to the anthropologist. On the contrary, if depth-psychology has to be studied and problems having a bearing on personality have to be investigated, such inter-disciplinary co-operation is almost indispensable. Specialists in social statistics, agronomy and economics can help in the planning and conduct of such research in more ways than one.

In order that an adequate sample of all the subcultures is satisfactorily studied, and the norms of the society as well as the range of variation in behaviour patterns are sufficiently grasped, participation of a team of trained investigators is necessary. It has already been suggested that participation in such research of persons with differing cultural backgrounds, including some who actually belong to the community which is being studied, will be an invaluable aid towards proper subjective evaluation in the research itself and in its presentation also.

In India, where ways of life and thought are changing very fast, we require a large number of such community studies, both in rural and urban areas, in the different cultural regions of the country. We owe it to posterity that we leave careful records of contemporary life and cultures. As it is, for their historical and cultural interest alone such studies are worth undertaking. But their importance is greater at the present juncture because the country is undergoing significant technological changes, and it is necessary for us to assess and evaluate their human implications. Here we have the unique opportunity of making a 'pre-clinical' study of the communities as they are to-day, and then of studying them stage by stage under the impact of new technological factors. The social scientist can, in the first instance, make a really valuable contribution to social planning by publishing full and objective reports of his research; and as the volume of such data grows, ground will be prepared for the competent analysis of many problems of deeper theoretical interest. At the present time intensi-

[1] Cf. John Gillin, 'Methodological Problems in the Anthropological Study of Modern Cultures', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (July–September [illegible], pp. 392–399.

I: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW 17 Telugu AW 17

fication of community research is an urgent *desideratum*. As far as possible, in each culture-area it would be desirable to study one or more villages, a representative small town, two or three individual castes within the total network of inter-caste relations; and these studies could then be followed by more intensive investigations into specific problems, such as those of family and kinship, leadership and exercise of authority, social stratification, social change and personality. Preliminary studies can at best offer tentative hypotheses, but for theoretical developments of lasting significance we shall have to await more data gathered according to modern techniques of field research. 121

IV

This book is a descriptive study of the village of Shamirpet in the State of Hyderabad. It is an outcome of the Social Service Extension Project sponsored by the Osmania University and a plan of community study organized by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. The Social Service Extension Project was organized in response to the call of educationists and national leaders to bring university students and teachers in contact with the realities of everyday life in the rural areas of the country. Shamirpet was selected because it was not far away from the city of Hyderabad and yet not near enough to be simply a suburban extension; was neither too large nor too small in respect of its area and population among the villages of this part of the country, and was fairly representative of the Telangana area of Hyderabad in its caste composition. Six faculties of the University—Arts, Agriculture, Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry, Medicine, Engineering and Education—were each represented by one member of the staff and two or more post-graduate or senior students. Each unit was to do social work within its own special area of interest and technical competence. Funds were available for approved schemes, such as medical relief, introduction of modern methods of agriculture and animal care, adult education and cultural programmes, improvement of village sanitation and construction of better ventilated houses, etc. The Arts faculty was represented by post-graduate students of anthropology and trained research assistants, and was primarily responsible for the social and economic study of the village community. The other units had to study the problems [122]

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

121 arising in their respective fields, and were to help in doing specific investigations which were assigned to them from time to time. I had the privilege of directing both the research and the social service programme, and while the units were left free to a considerable extent in their respective welfare work, I was associated with the planning, direction and conduct of the research itself at
121 every stage. The inter-faculty teams worked in the village for two
114 summer vacations—extending to twenty weeks—and the anthropological unit remained in touch with the village for a whole year. At various stages the larger team included three women members —a doctor, a sociologist belonging to the Muslim community for work among the *purdah*-observing Muslim women, and an American lady, with training in psychology and anthropology, who was a 'guest' member of the team. The anthropology unit consisted of five members, each with post-graduate training in anthropology, four of whom spoke the regional language of the village and had spent many years in the countryside of the Telangana area of Hyderabad. Three of these members had previous training in practical field-work. As they were all Hindus by birth, we had further to seek the help of a woman lecturer trained in sociology for work among the Muslim women.

123 To begin with, the response of the village people was rather
609 cold. For a short while we were regarded as missionaries; then as government agents brought into the village for organizing anti-communist propaganda. Some high-caste Hindus thought that we were there to instigate the low-caste untouchables to revolt against them. But our resources, especially our tents, crockery and cooks and buses, impressed them. The co-operation of highly placed officials rehabilitated us in the eyes of the village folk, and many of them who went to the city and made enquiries about us from educated relations returned to the village satisfied about our credentials. But more than all this, the excellent work of the Medical unit established rapport with the community, and the sympathetic welfare activities of the Agriculture, Veterinary and Education units further helped us to establish more intimate contacts with the people. They were benefiting by our presence: in the first two months 390 cases were treated by the Medical unit; several useful demonstrations were given by the Agriculture and Veterinary units, who also distributed vegetable seeds, plants of fruit-bearing trees and modern chemical fertilizers. The adult

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

education centre attracted many people from the village; both the library and cultural programmes became popular. The Engineering unit dug soakpits in the village, improved the village well and constructed several model smokeless ovens. This changed the attitude of the people considerably. To begin with the investigators making anthropological enquiry were regarded as a nuisance; now they were tolerated as inquisitive but friendly outsiders. In a few days there was a change for the better. We had never talked politics or religion, there was no propaganda or attempt at reform and no superiority of city-ways and sneering at the rustic ways of the village people in our attitude. Indifference turned into warmth and friendship, and at this point we intensified our anthropological investigations. At first a general sociological census of the community was taken, and later investigations of specific problems were started. A sample of 120 families representing different castes and levels of income, education and urban contacts was selected for intensive investigations. Episodic and topical life-histories were recorded from 80 people, besides 11 full biographies. This was done in a series of free-association interviews, which were controlled only in the final stages. Besides this the established method of participant observation and the usual techniques of anthropological enquiry were also used. The life-histories provide most of the material on inter-personal relations and attitudes, much of which has been translated in this book from the actual words of the informants. All the available village records were carefully studied, and as far as possible all the material collected was carefully checked. The research reports by other units on topics assigned to them—such as the medical examination of 1,200 people, a diet and nutritional survey, a survey of village agriculture and its problems, a survey of animal care and health—were carefully studied at the time of the preparation of this report and used at appropriate places; but most of them will be published, it is hoped, independently in professional journals.

My aim in this book has been to give a clear and intimate picture of some aspects of life in one Indian village. As the book is likely to be used by social anthropologists and sociologists as well as by others, I have endeavoured to keep my presentation fairly general. As our project had received considerable publicity in the Indian press we could not hide the identity of the village in a pseudonym. This in its turn has created several problems in the